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BISHOP BELO INTERVIEWED BY 'MATRA'

'We want more freedom'

The following interview of Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, Bishop of Dili, was published by the Jakarta monthly, Matra, in August 1992.

Shortly after this interview appeared, Jawa Pos which has a correspondent in Dili, reproduced excerpts from it. In an introduction, the paper commented that following the 12 November 'incident', the Bishop was interviewed several times by the paper. Recently however, the Bishop said he only wanted to be interviewed about religious and spiritual affairs. The day after the Matra interview appeared, Jawa Pos again sought an interview with him but was refused. This interview shows why Bishop Belo is so angry with the Indonesian press.

Comment: From this interview it appears that Bishop Belo is resigned to accepting integration though he insists that a referendum is necessary to legitimise it. He apparently believes that a referendum would result in a victory for integration though he says nothing to explain why.

Q: This bay here makes the place romantic, Monseigneur.
A: This town has long stopped being romantic. But, yes, it looks quite calm.

Q: Perhaps this house is the safest place around?
A: Ha... ha... ha! Yes, conditions here are unsettled. There is still something wrong.

Q: What's wrong, in your opinion?
A: The people of East Timor must be able to live in an atmosphere where they feel they have a place, that they are human beings, that they are being given attention; they must be given the freedom to be complete human beings. These conditions can be achieved if physical and material development is accompanied by human development. That's what is not yet happening here.

Q: Human development? What do you mean?
A: People should have the freedom to move, the freedom to think, the freedom to express their opinions. The freedom to say that there are things they don't like. There is no such democracy yet. We have to start teaching democracy at the lowest level, at primary school. If people live in a democracy they will happily get involved in working for progress. The important thing now is to give them the key, to become involved. What I have noticed recently is that people have closed up more than ever. They have become more and more closed. This is happening here. I sometimes even feel that society is very apathetic. People at the top say everything's OK, everything's alright, and the people answer in unison, saying yes, everything's alright, everything's OK.

Q: From what you hear and feel, what is it that lies deep in the hearts of the people?
A: This is something basic. People feel that this is their region, their home. They consider themselves to be the ones who own this place and they want to be placed in a proper position as the owners. They say, we must be able to feel that we are the owners of our own home.

Q: But what actually happens?
A: We Timorese behave like robots. We're told go here, or to go there. But we cannot see who is telling us to do this. They are playing behind the scenes.

Q: As far as you know, what has the government done for the people?
A: The government has indeed done things for the community, especially for the small folk. I would like development to be focused on the more remote places. But the most important thing is that people in the towns and the villages must feel that development is for them. Who is the asphalt road in Dili for? Who is that luxury building for? Who uses it?

Q: Are you saying that development is not for the people?
A: The infrastructure achieves its target though not yet perfectly. Let's hope that in the next phase, the desires and aspirations of the community will be fulfilled. The most important thing of all is that we want to be a little freer. This is something very fundamental. Not free from Indonesia but free as citizens of this country. Others are free in Java; those living in Maluku are free. We also want to be as free as they are, here in East Timor. Not like the present, when I feel freer in Jakarta than here in Dili. This means that there's something wrong.

Q: Have there been any efforts to struggle for this freedom?
A: Oh yes, within the limits possible. The leaders and the people are afraid to strive for freedom. Ha... ha... ha! Indeed, people's representatives who should speak up in fact say nothing. I don't know who is to blame. Maybe it's our fault for choosing people who are afraid (to speak up) as representatives of the people. That's what our democracy has led to. Ha... ha... ha!

Q: If that's the case, the basic question isn't integration?
A: For me, no. I think that being part of Indonesia is no longer a problem. The problem is, how this young region called East Timor can grow up. If there are those who still make an issue of integration, that's their problem. For me, the problem is no longer integration.

Q: At present, there are still groups that make an issue of integration. As leader of the religious community, don't their activities worry you?
A: Yes, they are still with us. It doesn't worry me. I want to be a democrat. As a democrat, everyone from the extreme right to the extreme left will have a place in my heart, although I don't necessarily agree with them. Neo-Liberals, neo-Fascists or extreme Communists all have a place in my heart, above all because they are human beings. We must have the courage to sit down together, to have dialogue as civilised human beings, as democrats, to seek out the truth and put to rights those things that are still wrong.

Q: What do you feel about the fact that the UN still does not recognise integration?
A: We should try to get this recognition. That's what I meant when I wrote to the UN Secretary-General asking for a referendum to be held. People regarded this as a mistake. What would happen is that, if a referendum is held and the majority want integration, the referendum will be accepted by the UN and everyone will be happy. In the first place, because the majority supports integration and secondly, because the UN supports it. Then we would all be happy.

Q: If you were in the government's place, would it be correct to hold a referendum?
A: The government's position is different. The government's position is that integration is a fact, both de jure and de facto. This is what the government thinks. But we should not forget that we also have to deal with the world outside, that we must place ourselves in this international context. But, that's enough of this. This is politics....

Q: Would it be more beneficial if a referendum were held?
A: The important thing is to give us the freedom to choose. I think the people can see for themselves and judge the benefits of the past fifteen years. After seeing all that, the people may choose integration. But what I want to emphasise is if a process of choice happens, with everyone aware of what has happened, those who made the choice will be responsible for the result. Since we were the ones who made the choice but then have to suffer the consequences, we would be able to take responsibility. But if no-one knows what happened, as at present... (Mgr Belo did not continue.) Oh yes, there is still a great deal to be done.

Q: What was it that prompted you to send that letter asking for a referendum?
A: At the time, I was extremely disappointed with the worsening state of affairs here. The letter was an attempt on my part to change things for the better. Indeed, there are times when we have to act firmly because the normal way of doing things simply doesn't work. Now, thank goodness, there have been corrections and improvements.

Q: Which is more effective, to make efforts through foreign channels or to struggle here inside?

A: After my private letter was made public (in the world's press, Ed.) and they (the government) made corrections in the general situation here, I felt that I should adopt a different position. I now think it's better to struggle here inside in order to get a status for East Timor that gives our people greater opportunities to be responsible for the region.

Q: What was it that prompted that change in the kind of struggle?
A: I began to think that I, as an individual and as an Indonesian citizen, should make my small contribution to the state and to all the Indonesian people, not just to East Timor. If possible, I would like my ideas and attitudes - if they are of any use - to be used by the entire nation.

Q: Do you think that the security forces are dealing correctly with groups that don't yet support integration?
A: I don't want to teach others about Pancasila but I think that we should get back to Pancasila and especially the principles of justice and humanity. The interests of the human being stand above the interests of the state and above the interests of security. Those groups should be properly treated. They should be coaxed, encouraged, and so on, before military action is taken.

Q: Hasn't ABRI begun to conduct a territorial operation to mingle closely with the people?
A: I see this in two ways. On the one hand, okay, they produce results for the people and I appreciate that. On the other hand, I am deeply afraid because everything is done and built by the military. This could result in the people being even less willing to get involved. "Why should we bother, why do we have to do things ourselves. Let them get on with it...."

Excessive involvement of the military can mean not giving the community or civilians the chance to work for development. What should be happening is that the general public, civilians, should be encouraged, so that a time will come when they will do it themselves. The military should withdraw so that the community takes responsibility for progress and for their lives.

Q: How do you think the territorial operation (opster) should be conducted?
A: I think opster should only aim at helping the community. It should not be for the purpose of staying at the side of the community, so as to watch everyone's movements. They should not be there as intel. Let me be quite clear. I hear many complaints. Five kilometres of road is built and there's a ceremony officiated by a minister. Another thing. There are village heads, district chiefs, sub-district chiefs, a local assembly. But often, after they have been chosen, they adopt a bad attitude, act like feudals. There should be no place for a feudal attitude in an era of development. It's not right. It won't help.

Q: What are you yourself doing to draw those in the upper echelons closer to the idea of giving the people a role?
A: I do whatever is possible within the office I hold. When I travel to the regions, I speak to people and to their leaders. I also speak to the government and to ABRI. These are my methods. It's rather different. I don't hold public meetings.

Q: Do you not try to encourage dialogue....?
A: Yes, there should be dialogue (Mgr Belo cut in). But dialogue must be free. That is essential. There have been dialogues and meetings, but the impression I have is that people only raise things which they think are acceptable. If they raise things that are not likely to be acceptable, those who said such things go home and can't sleep peacefully because they are afraid of being summoned and interrogated.

Q: What have you done to create good relations between the Church and ABRI?
A: I don't have military force and I don't want to make any comments. But I want to say that I find it very regrettable that many people believe that I am obstructing development, that I am anti-integration, that I am two-faced, that I encourage the young people to go on demonstrations. I am really unhappy about this. Maybe they have evidence to support their opinion, but if so, why don't they bring it out into the open? (Mgr Belo was quiet for a while, Ed.) This is very unpleasant. The result is that we live in a state of mutual distrust. This is what makes me very unhappy. In the first place, I am not two-faced. Second, if we all want to restore tranquillity and freedom in East Timor, I think priority should be given to civilians. If possible, our friends in the army should stick to purely military duties.

Q: But ABRI has a dual function.

A: Yes, and I personally don't understand where the limits between the functions lie. This should be explained. As things are here in East Timor, the military are everywhere, in social affairs, the economy, culture, tourism, social communications. So what is left for civilians? If this is the case, let's just have mono-function. Ha... ha... ha! Those who have followed a military calling should stick to military tasks and leave everything else to others.

Q: In other words, you want things to be as normal here as in other regions.
A: (Mgr Belo said nothing for a while.) What is clear is that this region should not be treated as a province in a state of emergency. We have a different background, a different history and culture from other parts of Indonesia. This is what the central government should realise. We understand Bhinneka Tunggal Ika [Unity in Diversity, the State Motto]. If East Timor is just equated with other provinces, it means that Bhinneka Tunggal Ika will not apply in East Timor. If you want to apply that motto, then East Timor must be treated in a special way, given a special status - but I don't mean a state of emergency.

Q: Do you mean that these differences should be properly recognised?
A: Yes, in formal juridical terms and in implementation. There should be greater regional autonomy.

Q: Have relations between the Church and the local government been good?
A: Yes. I have been here for nine years. I cooperate with the governor, with district chiefs, with sub-district chiefs. With central government agencies, for instance, their local offices, it's less so, but, in general, it's alright.

Q: Governor Carrascalao has almost come to the end of his term. There have been strong calls for his successor to be someone from the region. What do you want?
A: Ha... ha... ha! My demand is, listen to what the people want. The East Timorese are often called ignorant and backward. The views of these simple, ignorant people often astonish me. They say: we here are the ones who have a direct interest in who becomes the governor here. That's why we'd like the governor to be an East Timorese and a Catholic.

Q: The law says nothing about the governor of East Timor having to be someone from the region and a Catholic.
A: Isn't it so that an East Timorese who is a Catholic is also an Indonesian citizen? There are many candidates. But don't choose a candidate who favours certain groups, certain circles, certain groups or conglomerates. I say again that I think that the governor of East Timor should be someone from this region who is a Catholic.

Q: Are these two conditions a matter of principle?
A: Yes. It's because very few people have learnt to understand the innermost feelings of the people of East Timor. As the saying goes, the voice of the community is the voice of God. What I would say is that this voice of the people is the voice of God. Ha... ha... ha!

Q: What is the position of the Catholic Church in the everyday life of the East Timorese people?
A: The church lives in the midst of the community in order to spread news about one thing, that it must be saved. The church is the congregation and the congregation is the church. Whatever the congregation feels is felt by the church. Whatever the church feels is felt by the congregation. The two are inseparable. Sometimes, people see the church as a hierarchy. That is something different though hierarchy is a part of the congregation.

The role of the church is none other than that preached by Christ at the very beginning of the life of the church, to spread the Gospel to all humanity. That's why the church came to East Timor in the 16th century. Although Portugal left East Timor, the church remained. Indonesia came in. The church remained, living alongside the people to achieve God's call to save the world, especially the soul and the whole of humanity. And so the church strives to do everything in its power to create whole human beings, in the spiritual and material sense.

Q: Some people think that the church goes too far, particularly in matters that lie outside the realm of prayer. What do you say to this?
A: The church's message relates to the whole human being. Our message relates to the soul, the sacraments and deliverance. We are also able to save people in other respects. We have ideas and

opinions about social and economic matters, about justice and peace. This is what is sometimes misunderstood by some people. If I speak out, they say I'm engaging in politics. When I only busy myself with the sacraments, they say this is what the priests and bishops should be doing. But our duty relates to all aspects of life, in particular the moral, the ethical and the spiritual. We don't practise these things at a technical level. It is for the politicians to strive to realise the church's view of things in practice.

Q: What is the best way to combine your position as citizen with your position as a bishop directly responsible to the Vatican?
A: There have been many prejudices about this, leading to mistaken views. All dioceses and all bishops are directly under the Vatican's control. All bishops are required to make a full report about their diocese to the Holy Father every five years. And they go personally to submit their report orally. There's no difference between the Diocese of Menado and the Diocese of Dili.

Q: Is the problem then that the Dili Diocese is not yet inside the KWI (the Bishops' Conference of Indonesia)?
A: This brings us onto the international arena. East Timor is still on the agenda of the UN. The Vatican does not want to pre-empt a decision by the UN. When the UN no longer makes an issue of integration, the Dili Diocese will join the KWI. I sometimes ask those who make an issue of this: do you think that if we were to join the KWI, all our problems would be solved?

Q: It could be that if you were to join the KWI, it would be easier to solve the problems.
A: Solved? By who? By Mgr Leo (Mgr Leo Soekoto, KWI secretary-general) or Mgr Darmaatmadja (KWI chairman) in Jakarta? If we wanted to regulate the church and the dioceses, we would be on the way to becoming a theocracy. This would no longer be a Pancasila state but a state like Iran.

Q: What is the best way to build the link between religion and the state?
A: In my opinion, there should be a clear separation. The secular should handle secular affairs. The religious should handle religious affairs. This is why I do not believe that religion should be used for worldly objectives. Religion is above politics. Religion should push things from inside, as a moral force.

Q: Should you, as a religious leader, speak up or stay silent when others accuse you and when you see your congregation being unjustly treated?
A: I think that the voice of the congregation should be heard. As a religious leader, there are times when one should speak out and times when one should stay silent.

Q: When is it right to speak out and when is it right to stay silent?
A: I speak out when people are in a state of unrest, when they are being oppressed, when they are being treated unjustly and in conflict with Pancasila. I speak out because sometimes the situation demands that I should. I don't speak out for the sake of opposition but so as to help improve things.

Q: And what if the things you say damage your own position?
A: That's all part of my life's calling. I cannot stand by in silence when something needs to be changed. I must have the courage to take a stand. Sometimes people accuse me of being too strong. If this means my taking positions that are unpopular, so be it. That's the risk. But not everyone is unhappy with this. Those who like what I do say that, because people have no voice and cannot speak out, the bishop must do so. Others don't have the space to speak probably because they are afraid.

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Matra interview of Bishop Beli: Part II

Q: Why is it that recently you have not said much?
A: It's difficult. When I speak, my words are misinterpreted. Newspapers and journals are not neutral when they report what I say. They are biased. They don't consider all sides of the question; only one side is highlighted. What should I say to such journalists or press organs?

Q: Do you think that the Indonesian press is biased?
A: One would need to make a careful analysis to say that. But it's my impression that the Indonesian press is being manipulated. Ha... ha... ha!

Q: Was this especially apparent in the reporting about the 12 November incident?
A: Since long before that. Many people wrote very biased things without seeking confirmation from me. I have often been very disappointed.

Q: The courts have started passing down verdicts on people charged in connection with the 12 November incident. What, in your opinion, was the cause of that incident?
A: We need to examine a number factors in relation to 12 November. Many opinions need to be heard and scrutinised. Those young people had long been complaining that there was no work for them after leaving school. Some said that colonialism is emerging in East Timor. All the teachers are from outside, all the civil servants are from outside. Go into any government office and all the employees are from outside. For the simplest jobs in road-building, they bring in people from outside. And these workers bring their children and their brothers and sisters.

Q: Do you think that it was lack of employment that influenced the young people to take action?
A: The lack of jobs is not the main thing. They see that there are many vacancies and wonder why they are filled by people from outside. Just go into any office and you will see only one or two people from here. The vast majority are outsiders. Take for instance the Department of Religious Affairs, where there are only one or two Timorese. The district religious offices are also all headed by people from outside. People forget that the majority of people here are Catholics. How is it possible for other religious people to understand the affairs of the majority of people here in East Timor?

Then, it is said that lots of factories will be set up, a pineapple cannery, a sugar-mill, and many others as well. But none of this has happened. So people begin to ask why, isn't there something wrong? People don't want to come here because they won't be able to make profits from East Timor, or perhaps because there are plenty of other possibilities. People hope for large-scale investments. Java has become the industrial centre. Are we, who are on the fringes, only to be the garden? I know that Java is preferred by investors because it has many facilities that don't exist elsewhere. But those investors should be motivated by the spirit of nationalism, meaning that they would consider investment in East Timor not merely on the basis of business calculations, but take other considerations into account and realise that places outside Java also need attention.

Q: Young people in Dili are seen as being bent on holding demonstrations. Do you, in your day-to-day contact with the community, have the same impression?
A: It should be carefully investigated. We are often too quick to level accusations. Sometimes, I see among the young people others who are running the show, directors on top of the directors. Another thing that needs to be examined is that certain people know that a movement is in preparation but allow the balloon to get bigger and bigger until it bursts. In actual fact, the aspirations being articulated by the young people here are part of the dynamic of all young people. It happens not only here but also in Jakarta, in Bandung, in Korea, in Palestine. Why is it that in other places, young people can speak up but they must keep silent here?

Q: Some people say that the young people who are accused of holding demonstrations are the products of the education system set up after integration.
A: Not only that. What is more important is that they have studied the 1945 Constitution the Preamble of which states that all forms of colonialism must cease everywhere in the world. They have learnt from that. They see the reality in their everyday lives, they see the leaders of society, the people in charge here.

Q: From what you know, are there problems with education here in East Timor?
A: The most striking progress here has indeed been made in the field of education. There are many schools, even down to the villages. But this is where I hear the most complaints. The progress has only been in quantity, not in the quality of education. I get complains about teachers who don't turn up, teachers going to meetings, teachers going on tour to all kinds of places in connection with duties that have nothing to do with their pupils. I have the impression that it's the kids who are teaching the teachers.

Many people ask why this is allowed to happen. These days in East Timor, there is no national discipline in the education sector.

Q: We hear of many teachers being beaten by their pupils. Why is that?
A: There are many reasons. There are many repressed feelings among the younger generation. They complain that more and more teachers are being brought in from outside - outsiders. They say that the teachers are often dishonest.

Since integration, it has become the custom for all pupils to go up to the next class every year, regardless of whether they are clever or dunces. Everyone passes. Is that honest? The result is, that if, suddenly, some pupils don't go up, they blame the teacher. So the pupils beat the teachers because they think that everyone should pass and go up. I blame the teachers for this, or perhaps the fault lies with the instructions they get from above, the wrong approach. Maybe, they want to win sympathy but it boomerangs. To say nothing of 'envelopes', bribes; we are seeing more and more of such things. This is why I often say that there is no education in the field of education.

Q: If the pupils misbehave, is it all their fault?
A: Oh, the pupils also make mistakes, but I think that most of the blame lies with those who are supposed to be doing the educating. The teachers and others are turning the schools and pupils into a political arena. They come under the influence of a variety of interests. So, the young people split up into groups. Some are with the anti-integration groups, others with the pro-integrationists. This is utilised for purposes which are not understood by the school-children, to spy on suspects.

Q: Speaking about what prompted the 12 November incident, you said just now that there were many factors. Can you mention some of the other factors?
A: Their most fundamental complaint is that the question of integration has not yet been resolved in a peaceful and democratic way. Integration is already a fact but it must be for us to accept it. It is for us to decide, for us to accept or reject integration. Integration is not something that can be forced. If integration is a fact, we should be treated properly, like citizens in other parts of Indonesia. The young people here complain, saying it's as if East Timor is a region won in battle, a military conquest, not a region integrated in an acceptable way by the motherland. These are the complaints that I hear.

Q: What about Fretilin?
A: Yes, Fretilin and Xanana Gusmao (Xanana Gusmao, who is known as the president of Fretilin [sic] Ed) still exert some influence. People who still want to follow Xanana believe that the fire of independence should not be extinguished. But apart from this, one should also take account of the fact that ABRI was unable to control itself during that incident. Another important factor is that many civilians, many East Timorese who were in the lead, were from the intel, spying on their fellow East Timorese. During August, September and October, up to the time of the 12 November outburst, many people were divided into two groups. One was the group of intel agents, while the other consisted of those who were being reported by these agents.

Q: Which group were you in?
A: I was among those being reported... ha... ha... ha! There were all kinds of reports. That I had held illegal meetings in my home, that I had hidden weapons, that I had sent letters abroad. Every move I made was monitored, my sermons were taped, my letters were censored.

Q: Is there any truth in reports that your home was used to hide weapons and as a refuge for demonstrators?
A: Loving care is part of the work of priests and bishops. Our work has nothing to do with weapons. If someone comes and asks for protection, we have to respond, whatever their politics. They are human beings, creatures of God.

Q: Does the fact that your personal letters have been disseminated mean that there are intel agents inside the church or in your own household?
A: Yes, it does. I know that. After meetings to discuss church affairs, there are often people who report. I know there are people who are under instructions or being paid to listen to everything I say, follow all my statements, get hold of my letters. Take for instance the letter (of 6 February 1989) to the UN Secretary-General about the need to hold a referendum. The day after it was sent, the general public knew all about

it. Very strange. They are right inside my circle. The letter had been taken from a place which only people close to me know anything about. We shouldn't be surprised at such things; anything can happen here. Once, in a sermon, I got rather angry and insinuated: "Those of you who drink tea from Indonesia or who eat white rice from Indonesia listen carefully."

Q: Does this kind of thing worry you?
A: As far as that letter was concerned, I felt worried but also not worried. What worried me was that many people did not like what I did. But in the end, I thought, OK, and I calmed down. If the letter was now in the public domain, there was nothing I could do about it. I hoped that it could be discussed publicly in order to find a peaceful and just solution for East Timor. I am not worried about the intel agents. I know the ones who follow me, who are watching me. When I give lectures or sermons, I know the people who are sitting in front of me. I speak to everyone. Maybe they will repent.

Q: Do you think that what they are doing is wrong?
A: I don't think it's wrong, but it is not pleasant, not the decent thing to do. I don't like it. And it makes me feel that this is a police state. Everything I do, all my activities, every word, are followed and monitored. It shouldn't be like this. With such things happening, I feel that I am living in a police state. From what I have learnt about Pancasila, I tend to think that this is not the Indonesia that aspires to Pancasila. But this is all happening right here in East Timor.

Q: During one court hearing, you were mentioned as the conduit for sending state documents to Ramos-Horta. Did that actually happen?
A: I wrote about that to the Attorney-General and the regional chief of police. I explained that I did not know the witness who mentioned my name in the court. That person probably knew me or had met me because I meet many people in the congregation. But I did not personally know the person who was being charged or the witnesses. Many people come to my home but no-one has ever come bringing secret state documents to be sent abroad. That's the first point. The second point is that I don't know Ramos-Horta's address and I have never had any dealings with him. When he was studying in Dili, I was abroad. I don't know what he is up to now. What I do know is that his father was a district chief in Portuguese times.

Q: Supposing someone came and gave you secret state documents....
A: I would certainly hand them back (Mgr Belo quickly interrupted). As the leader of an important institution, why should I get involved in such things? What for? I think it's quite unnecessary. Perhaps I should say too that after my name was mentioned in court, the wife of that person came to my home one evening. She asked for forgiveness for her husband who had mentioned my name in court. I told her, never mind. For me, the matter is closed. What is important for me is that such a thing should not happen again.

What I do regret it that there are attempts to corner me and blame me. And the press went ahead and reported the news. This is perhaps what is called trial by the press. This is what I dislike. Even though I had written to the Attorney- General, the Indonesian press all over the country reported that I was involved. This is the extraordinary thing about the Indonesian press. I was being punished without anyone listening to what I, the person in question, had to say. That news was very biased indeed.

Q: Where does the diocese get its funds from?
A: We live primarily from funds from the congregation. If they live in impoverished circumstances, we can't do better than that. We also get funds from the government, 400 to 500 million rupiahs a year. This comes from the Department of Religious Affairs and goes direct to the parishes throughout East Timor to build or repair churches and chapels. We also get small amounts from the Vatican, primarily for seminars and religious teachers. The amount depends or our requests and the ability of the Vatican. We plan to build a new office at the side of the cathedral, but we don't yet have enough money.

Q: Next year, the MPR (People's Consultative Assembly) will meet. Do you have any special hopes?
A: Sometimes I ask myself whether this is a republic or a monarchy. Isn't there anyone else in Indonesia who can come forward as a new leader. Maybe there is. But perhaps the system is incapable of producing a new leader. Or it may be that many people have resigned themselves to things as they are or don't want to put themselves forward.

Q: And so?
A: We in East Timor are a little influenced by western culture. For instance, if a village head has served for four years, it's time for someone new to take over. Replacing people is a normal process.

Q: What kind of democracy do you think we should have?
A: For me, democracy should be more active. I constantly hear people talking about Pancasila democracy. I think that Pancasila democracy should also be active. Bring it into line with the demands of development and progress for the nation. When I heard that a Forum Demokrasi had been set up and what it planned to do, I was delighted.

Q: If invited, would you join the FD?
A: If I'm allowed to, I'd like to join. But why haven't we heard anything recently about its activities. Is it dead? The last I heard was that it wanted to hold a halal bihalal [gathering to mark the end of Ramadhan] but this was banned. Ha... ha... ha!

Q: To what extent do you think we can fight for a more open democracy?
A: I think there should be confidence in the nation's ability to become mature. For this we need to have a climate in which differences of opinion are valued. If we can't have this, the nation will go on being an infant. When shall we grow up? It's time the organs of social control were given greater freedom of action. There should also be more freedom of assembly. For instance, if the three political parties are incapable of taking on board people's aspirations, maybe there's need for an alternative. But, please excuse me, I don't want to be a teacher of democracy.

Q: What in your view should be expected of a leader?
A: A leader should set the example for the nation and know how to lead the nation, give wise and just leadership for all groups and all individuals, and be capable of encouraging all the vitality in society.

[Two questions and answers about leadership problems and the danger of close liaisons between leaders and business in various countries are omitted.]

Q: Here in East Timor, there is said to be a monopoly controlling the coffee trade.
A: I hope this will end soon. Maybe it has already ended. It is very damaging for the people. People are no longer interested in tending their coffee gardens. They are only allowed to sell to one businessman who gives them a very low price, below the market price.

I'm not a coffee grower but I've suffered from the situation personally. Once when I was returning from Ermera, the local congregation gave me a gift which they put in my car. On my way back to Dili, I was stopped by soldiers who said that the bishop wasn't allowed to transport coffee, even if it was a gift. Ha... ha... ha! They said there were instructions from above. So they took my gift of coffee. The officer said the coffee would be taken to the district military command for inspection. The next day, I asked the governor whether there was a ban on individuals carrying coffee even when the quantity was small. He was astonished. He told me not to bother. Ha... ha... ha! It was only a few dozen kilos of coffee. It's such treatment that shows how constricted we are. I heard that even as recently as last year, people's coffee was being taken. Yet, many East Timorese depend on coffee for their livelihood.

Q: What hopes do you have of the central government?
A: It should give proper attention to East Timor. If possible give it broader autonomy or special status. We have a different history, a different culture. It is the right of the President to decide. There are many aspects that need to be studied for special autonomy. I don't know whether it should be the same as in Yogya or Aceh. What's important is that the governance and culture of East Timor should be given proper attention. And there should be changes in security policy. I know that we could be submerge if we were to go it alone. We don't have the skilled personnel, there isn't enough infrastructure. That's why we are part of Indonesia. But by choosing to join, it doesn't mean that the cultural differences and the different background should be ignored.

Q: Who selects and looks after your clothes?
A: I go to the shop or the tailor myself and wear ordinary clothes but even so, many people surround me and want to kiss my hand. Even though here in front of my home there is a beautiful beach, I've only been there once. Many people came and asked me, 'Why are you going to the beach?' Strange, isn't it,

yet all I want is to be like other people. People here can't understand that a bishop is not an angel, he's just a normal human being like everyone else, who wants to do sports and to have some recreation. They want the bishop to live a life apart, not to mingle with people at the grass-roots or play football, not to go on pleasure trips. I am expected to wear my robe whenever I go out. But I personally don't want to be hidebound all the time by these formalities. I am a member of the Salesian Order which was set up by Dom Bosco who worked with the youth. I joined the Salesians precisely because I want to live among the people. For a Salesian to be moved to Dili and become the bishop was like going to prison. Ha... ha... ha! I had to stop doing sports, to stop mixing with young people. But I must turn this prison into something worthwhile.

Q: Do you balance this with music?
A: Yes, I like music very much. Indonesian kroncong, Indonesian or western pop. Also classical music and rock. Ha... ha... ha! Beatles and Beethoven, especially his Ninth Symphony. I always try to buy new cassettes. Whenever I go to Jakarta, I always bring home one or two cassettes.

Q: What do you feel when you listen to Beethoven's Ninth?
A: The greatness of God. I like listening to it when I work. I always play music when I am working. Classics when I am reading. Rock when I am writing. I feel more productive when I am listening to something. Does this sound strange for a bishop? Ha... ha... ha!

Q: Do you often watch football on television?
A: I like football. Sometimes I wake up at 2 in the morning to watch a football match in Europe. Koeman and Gullit are some that I like to watch. I don't like boxing. This is a punishing sport. The body, the face is punched. I regard sport as something to make us more humane, sportive, to appreciate one's rival. Sport teaches us to compete peacefully, in a state of equality and balance. I much prefer sports to international meetings or negotiations. Ha... ha... ha!

Q: Do you have any time to read?
A: Yes. I try to find time every day to read. I read books about theology and sometimes about history. At present I am reading a book by a Spanish priest giving an assessment of Christ in the present day.

Q: What are your plans when you stop being the Bishop of Dili?
A: I want to go abroad to serve other nations, anywhere where I may be needed. Perhaps to China, Africa or Latin America. I want to contribute part of my life to other nations.

Q: Would that be after conditions for the East Timorese people are better?
A: After I am no longer required by the Holy Father to serve here. I have long wanted to become a missionary with another nation. That's if I am given the opportunity and long life by God.

Q: Is that because you feel you don't fit in here?
A: Up to now I have fitted in. But since I was a small boy, I have wanted to be a priest overseas, in China. I want to follow in the footsteps of Saint Fransiskus Xaverius, the Jesuit who went to China. His struggle has greatly impressed me. It was the story of this saint that made me decide to become a priest.